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THE INCARNATION
& OTHER POEMS

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HACON



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THE INCARNATION

AND OTHER POEMS.

By HENRY HACON,

VICAR OF SEARBY-CUM-OWMBY, LINCOLNSHIRE.

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PREFACE.

IN 1851 some juvenile verses of mine were published at my native town, Swaffham, in Norfolk. So that it is after a long interval that I am venturing to put forth another book. It contains what I have written during the last year or two.

In the larger poem I have glanced at the mistake of separating the Atonement as a doctrine from the doctrine of the Incarnation; in other words of making the Incarnation simply a necessary prelude to the Atonement instead of accepting the Incarnation as that great counsel of the Eternal God (of which the Atonement is a part), the climax of which is to be the conversion of the world and the union of its races into one holy temple on the two foundation stones, which that Incarnation has blended into one, of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. How far I have succeeded in giving expression to this truth must be left to the verdict of the reader. Both of this poem and of the shorter ones that follow, I would say in the motto of an old English bard :

Candide, si mala sint nostra inter carmina, parce ;
Et bona si quæ sint, Zoile, parco tibi.

SEARBY VICARAGE,
September 12, 1898.

TO MY NATIVE TOWN.

Rigid Utility's unsparing hand
Hath fenced in all the commons of the land.
And so thy wild heath, Swaffham, now no more
Sweeps round thee as it did in days of yore.
There oft I wandered in that happy time
When first my thoughts did wed themselves to
rhyme.
And now, impelled by that sweet memory,
I dedicate these later lays to thee.



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THE INCARNATION.

SWIFTER than the light of morning travels from
its central source

Angel-messengers from Heaven were speeding
on their earthward course ;

And as spirit speaks with spirit in a tongue to
man unknown

Was the wondrous consummation of a hidden pur-
pose shewn ;

And the Great Eternal Presence boundless as
the boundless space,

Seemed at one mysterious moment to assume
that winning grace

Which is seen when worldly greatness stooping
from its station high

Draws from hearts a holier homage by its meek
humility.

E'en as when some high-born mortal gives his
hands to servile toil,

Easing in his weary day-task a poor brother of
the soil.

For at that mysterious moment, where the resting
cattle fed,

One became a feeble infant in a Bethlehem
stable-shed :

He the Son, the Wellbelovèd, Second of the
Primal Three,

In the Bosom of the Father resting from
eternity,

Coming in His lowly greatness from a stainless
Virgin's womb

For a life of daily labour and a humble cottage
home.

In the world of art and nature searching eye
could never see

Aught that gives a worthy image of that awful
mystery :

Yet from art and nature's garden human thought
may dare to cull,

As she treads its winding mazes drinking in the
beautiful,

Here and there a fragrant blossom which her
hand may fitly twine

For a wreath where richer offerings blaze before
His lowly shrine.

Think we then, in lordly Athens how great
Pheidias of old

Bodied forth his spirit's vision in the ivory and
the gold :

Thus by Spirit-wrought conception in that Beth-
lehem stable lay

Essence Uncreate Eternal coupled with soul-
quicken'd clay.

For by power more than Pheidias in Redemp-
tion's gracious plan,

Not a false god but the True God deified the
form of man.

Look too where in cloudless ether night's meek
maiden mounting higher

Draws a superadded splendour from some planet's
silver fire :

So it was when Heaven's Daystar sheltered from
earth's rude alarms

Lay in infant weakness folded in the Virgin-
mother's arms.

For the star that adds the splendour, though so
small to mortal sight,

In its glory and its vastness soars above the
satellite.

Thus it was that the Great Presence circling
heaven and earth and sea

Gave a sign that mortal man was One with His
Infinity.

And the angels caught the signal, and, revealed
in glory bright,

Told the tidings to the shepherds watching o'er
their flock by night.
Oh the wonder, oh the glory, oh the benefit
unpriced,
Of the Hypostatic Union in the Person of the
Christ !
Sitteth He that lowly craftsman heir of want and
woe and pain
Where the angels at His glory veil their eyes
with pinions twain ;
And the God whose word of power ruleth heaven
and earth and hell,
Sits a worn and weary wanderer asking water at
the well.

Mortal man whose soul hath followed science in
her wondrous flight,
Tracing all her starry progress through the
watches of the night,
Let thy knowledge teach thee wisdom : how
much really dost thou know
Of the common things around thee in thy brief
life here below ?
Evermore is science baffled : all her triumphs
seem to teach

That beyond them lieth mystery which no human
quest can reach.

Climb to mental heights no other mortal man
hath ever trod :

Then fall down and kiss the shadow of the
mystery of God !

Seemeth it a thing that passes all belief that He
whose word

The deaf void of non-existence in obedient
silence heard,

Bursting into germs of being for development
sublime,

Æon merging into æon in the onward lapse of
time,

Should forego His Godhead's greatness, and,
enwrapped in swaddling bands,

Take a poor and lowly portion with the creatures
of His hands ?

Go we then in humble pondering to the revelation
high

Which declares the searchless mystery of the Holy
Trinity.

Never must we in that doctrine fail the difference
to see

Twixt the One Eternal Essence and the Personality.

Life inherent hath the Father, life that could be given by none ;

And to have that life inherent He hath given to the Son.

And the Eternal Son from heaven was sent to do the Father's will ;

And His meat and drink was ever that great purpose to fulfil.

In that Triune Life Eternal Perfect without void or flaw

Thus we see in mystic dimness meek subordination's law.

So an earthly son and father both a common nature own ;

But the son's subordination by the very name is shown.

Thus it is that God's sweet order man's rude violence doth leaven ;

For the things of earth are shadows of the higher things in heaven.

Vain to ask : " Could God's free mercy fettered be to such a plan ? "

Rather mark the demonstration of His wondrous love to man ;

And, as fruit of that example, how in many a soul
of worth
Godlike love can quell and conquer all the blandishments of earth;
Where a man, for mission-labour to reclaim a
world undone
In a deadly sphere of duty, doth not spare his only
son ;
Or where one in youth's fresh vigour, drawn by
love's resistless spell,
Gives himself to holy labour where the loathly
lepers dwell.
And the gate is closed upon him till he draws his
latest breath
Poisoned by the fell contagion of that brotherhood
of death.
Look again what shades incongruous form the
texture of man's life,
Order with disorder mingling in a never-ending
strife.
In him is a noble instinct that doth urge him to
aspire
Evermore and evermore to something deeper,
broader, higher,
Ever altering or destroying that which he hath but
begun,

Following hope that beckons onward till a farther
goal is won.

But the range of active working mortal man can
compass here

At its best is all too narrow for his soul's sublime
career.

Plans and projects stand unfinished when his
working days have sped,

Like the shattered shaft that mourneth over the
untimely dead.

Heaven's sweet boons of love and friendship seem
precarious gifts of chance,

Resting, flitting, gleaming, fading, like the wild-
fire's fitful dance.

Many mutually fitted to combine in concord sweet
Live and die in lonely longing, for they never
chance to meet.

And though of a full expansion every sign the bud
may show,

Death or change or chance may wither the fair
flower ere it blow.

For a little boy and maiden come with spirits free
and wild

For a summer morning's pastime with a solitary
child.

What are all the acquisitions to which older hearts
are glued
To his joy that summer morning in his sylvan
solitude,
As he points out all the wonders of the hill-side
and the plain,
Sits with them upon the green grass, lengthening
a daisy-chain,
And within his infant bosom feels the first delicious
thrill
Of that heaven-born affection which alone the heart
can fill ?
But those bright, fresh hours of sweetest soul-
communion quickly fly,
And the joyous summer shouting changeth to a
sad good-bye.
And he stands in speechless sorrow, and his tears
begin to flow,
Watching them as through the meadows hand in
hand they homeward go.
Other things will stir his bosom, other things will
fill his day ;
Fairy forms of sunbright fancies stay their wings
with him to play.
But at times o'er his young spirit comes a boding
sense of pain,

As, with pensive brow, he thinketh : " Will they
ever come again?"

No, my child; for fever's blighting power hath
their pathway crossed ;

And thy playmates of an hour are among the
loved and lost.

Through the stages, as they follow, of his ever-
changing life,

He may meet with much to cheer him in the
world's conflicting strife :

Comrade-schoolmates' arms thrown round him,
mutual secrets heard and told,

Sympathies of heart more precious than the miser's
hoarded gold ;

Gentle hands to smooth his pillow when his
temples throb with pain ;

Words of love and power that make his fainting
spirit strong again—

But through all the lights and shadows of a long
life's chequered round

Love and friendship in their fulness never never
hath he found.

And a gray-haired man is sitting by his solitary
hearth,

Weighing heaven's unseen completeness with the
emptiness of earth.

World-distractions once so potent now no more
his soul can move ;
And his heart is sad within him, pining for a little
love.
And his thoughts are going backward to that
happy summer day
When the little boy and maiden joined him in his
merry play,
Back to the green grassy meadows where they
wove their daisy-chain ;
And once more he asks the question : "Will they
ever come again?"

Yes, how soon the bright tints vanish of our child-
hood's early morn ;
And the shadows deepen o'er us as we near our
destined bourne.
Still that joy, though all the dewy freshness of its
prime hath fled,
Giveth now and then a token that it is not wholly
dead.
There's a sphere of thought and feeling known
to us and God alone,
Where we hear the mystic music of the child-life
that is gone ;

And it acts upon the spirit like the wind-harp's
 whispering string,
Or the sweet and subtile odour of the early blooms
 of spring.
But the din that rises ever from the world's un-
 resting throng
Drowns the soothing intonation of its murmurous
 undersong.

Would'st thou then in faith and patience grasp a
 truth that can assuage
All the woe and weary languor of thine earthly
 pilgrimage,
Ponder thou the wondrous doctrine on which hangs
 the gracious plan
Of fallen man's regeneration : " Man is God and
 God is Man."
Twixt the sinful woe-worn mortal and the God he
 cannot reach
Lo the mighty Daysman standeth, and a pierced
 hand toucheth each.
And by virtue of that contact man a perfect life
 can win,
Where his heart shall faint no longer 'neath the
 weary stress of sin,

Grasping the full compensation of that glorious
new birth,
Reading all the hopeless riddles which perplexed
him here on earth,
Finding friendships which had withered green
again, as Aaron's rod
Burst forth into bloom and fruitage 'neath the
quickenings power of God,
Free from death's foreboding shadow, free from
every care and pain,
The glad joy-bells of his childhood ringing in his
heart again.

All too feeble is our earthly embryo vision to
descry
What thou art and what thou art not, fathomless
eternity!
Strive we how we may to rise up into thy sublime
idea,
Still we people thee with forms that are familiar
to us here.
Boundless space—within whose vastness all the
rolling spheres of light,
All the suns whose scintillations gem the dusky
brow of night,

Are but as the tiny midges of the sultry summer
day,
That in inter-twining orbits spin their little lives
away—
Gives no solid consolation to the restless soul of
man,
Claims no kindred with the heart-joys of his being's
earthly span.
Speculation speaketh to him : " Mortal, let thy
spirit's eye
Pierce the cloud that veils the mystery of thine
unseen destiny.
Up on higher scales of being thou shalt mount
for evermore,
Every dawning acquisition richer than the one
before :
Unknown powers of spirit-rapture, unknown
powers of force and will ;
Objects in succession endless all those faculties
to fill.
Ay, 'twere well if we could bring ourselves by
exercise intense
To a pillared saint's abstraction from the things
of time and sense.
But our soul mid the conditions of a finite life
like this

Droops and faints beneath the heavy burden of so
vast a bliss.

We would fain imagine something less
oppressively sublime,

Some restored and sinless pattern of this life of
sense and time.

Use hath mighty power o'er us : here our sen-
tient life begun ;

In their grooves our habits circle like the planets
round the sun.

Though his heart can dance no longer to the
ringing chords of mirth,

Yet man clings with fond persistence to his
heritage of earth.

Fair and sweet as infant-dreamings spring hath
flown on rainbow wings ;

Summer hours have passed for ever with the
warmth that summer brings ;

Autumn of its teeming fruitage gave a rich and
full supply ;

Scant and withered are the relics that within the
garner lie.

But the man, though sitting sad and silent in his
wintered home,

Croucheth o'er life's dying embers till his sleeping-
time is come.

Thus although we feel assured it is better to
depart,
Yet the old life-long conditions keep their hold
upon the heart,
And though how 'twill be we know not, yet we
trust that there will be
A revival of our earth-joys in the great
eternity.
And He who came to dwell among us, Head and
Saviour of our race,
Showeth that the two conditions may
harmoniously embrace.
Though He spoke in solemn warning of the awful
doom of sin ;
Though He taught us we must bravely fight if we
a crown would win ;
Though He tells us we must sternly pluck out the
offending eye,
Cut the hand off that would draw us from the
paths of sanctity ;
Yet He shared in man's rejoicings where the
marriage-feast was spread,
Groaned in spirit with the mourners who were
weeping for their dead ;
And He shews us the poor wanderer to his
father's love restored,

Once more in a son's apparel sitting at his father's
board ;
And the music and the dancing filled the hall with
festive sound
For the dead son that was living and the lost one
that was found.
And our life in all the fulness of its sympathy
and love
He hath joined in endless union to the perfect
life above.
Thus the overpowering grandeur of the life that
is to be
Softens neath the homelike colours of the things
which here we see.
So, while all the valley round me laughed in
summer light below,
Have I seen the Himalayas in their everlasting
snow.
There they stand, those mighty landmarks, planted
by the Hand of God ;
There upstretch the icy passes ne'er by human
footstep trod ;
Bulge the buttresses tremendous from yon bul-
wark's frowning wall,
Where the stern unbroken silence doth the very
heart appal.

With a gaze of silent rapture we that distant
scene behold ;

Yet we seem to shiver in us : for it looks so
deadly cold.

But the sun that o'er the earth's wide circuit
spreads his golden light,

In his occidental glory sinking slowly from our
sight,

Over yonder glittering home of snow a gorgeous
mantle throws,

Tinging all its marble grandeur with the colour
of the rose.

Sinner, in thy chainless freewill thou hast played
an evil part,

And the guilt of thy transgression lieth heavy on
thine heart.

Rules of wise and holy living taught thee when
thy years were young

In the ripening of thy manhood's folly to the
winds were flung.

Thus, with faltering steps deserting wisdom's
straight and narrow way,

Thou did'st try some smoother bypath lured by
pleasure's Siren lay.

But not long thy footsteps falter : crowned with
 riot's drooping flowers,
Thou art blindly, madly, wasting all thy young
 life's golden hours.
And although thy palate sickens, there's a hand
 that doth supply
For thy pall'd inebriation cups of deadlier
 potency.
Deeper, darker, grows thy ruin ; to the dog
 whose dinning tongue
Fills thee with forebodings drear an atheistic sop
 is flung :
" They are fools and blind who credit all that
 men have fondly said
Of a great unseen Creator who shall judge the
 quick and dead.
'Tis the weary repetition of an old and worn out
 song
Which the policy of priestcraft through the ages
 doth prolong,
Cheating us with specious shadows of imaginary
 good,
Offering empty cups and platters in exchange for
 solid food.
For man cometh as the brute comes, and his
 functions are the same ;

And he dieth as the brute dies, and is but an
empty name."

But though thus thou hast departed from thy
Maker, yet doth He

Of His love and tender mercy still retain a hold
on thee,

Through the midnight silence speaking in a voice
with terror rife,

E'en as when the thunder crashes o'er a levin-
blasted life ;

And thy dormant conscience, wakened from its
slumber by that voice,

Owens the depth of thy transgression, owns the
folly of thy choice.

Far worse than the moral doubter in thine error
thou hast been :

His fault is a vicious judgment ; thou hast bartered
faith for sin.

Know thou surely atheistic thought, so far from
being free,

Is for man the direst, bitterest, soul-enshackling
slavery.

If thou ask why demonstration is not open to
thine eye,

In thine own self-conscious being thou can'st read
a full reply.

Think of all thy body's functions : thou would'st
 never say, I ween,
That in walking, running, leaping, 'twas a self-
 impelled machine.
Art thou not thyself the will whose impulse all
 that motion sways,
And whose faintest hint the body simultaneously
 obeys ?
Can'st thou frame a mental mirror where the
 features of that will
Backward thrown upon themselves a perfect
 semblance shall fulfill ?
Would'st thou then the true existence of thy
 conscious self deny
Because no form of it is focussed in the circle of
 thine eye ?
What else therefore is it, only in a richer, higher,
 way,
The great universe around thee working without
 stint or stay,
Stretching on, and ever onward, in its grand and
 cosmic plan
Farther far than thy weak sight with all its optic
 helps can scan,
Elements together mingling from whose action
 swift or slow

Issue forms of complex beauty human workshops
cannot show ?

Plain it is then, though He be impervious to our
human sense,

There must be a great Propelling Personal
Omnipotence.

Yes, the reasons that have led thee thy Creator
to deny

Stand on worse grounds than the grounds of
sceptical philosophy.

God was a restraint upon thee in thy passions'
evil day :

Thou would'st crush it into nothing, sweep the
bugbear clean away.

Now at length of thy transgression thou dost taste
the bitter part,

And the vulture retribution feeds upon thy living
heart.

But no Titan-courage in thee, with a sullen sense
of wrong,

Steels thee in thy spirit's bitter dole "to suffer
and be strong."

And thy life upholds thee only to endure thy
misery,

Like the plank that bears the shipwrecked sailor
up upon the sea.

And the sky is brass above him, and the wave is
liquid fire ;
And the eyes of hungry monsters follow him with
fell desire ;
And he drifteth till night's darkness adds its
horror to his doom :
O'er the lonesome waste of waters now no human
help can come.
Thou would'st fain shake off the terror, and
forgiving mercy clasp,
And tear thyself once and for ever from thy
sorrow's clinging grasp ;
And thou criest from the dark and dismal depth
of thy despair :
“ Is there any balm in Gilead ? Is there a
physician there ? ”
For between thee and thy Maker stands a wall of
triple brass,
Through whose folds thy fainting spirit struggles
all in vain to pass.

But at length a healing power o'er thy sickness
seems to move ;
And the song of the creation is once more the
voice of love.

Now to taste of purer pleasure ; now from what
God made so good
To supply thy spirit's healthy craving with its
proper food.
Ocean's briny breeze shall check the creeping
growth of languor's pain,
And bring the rosy flush of health back to thy
pallid cheek again.
Free from carking care's distraction, thou shalt
rove from clime to clime,
Where thy fertile fancy revelled in the day-dreams
of thy prime.
Fairest scenes of earth shall charm thee with an
ever-new delight ;
Cities of renown shall open all their treasures to
thy sight.
Ah, poor mortal, trusting this way permanent
repose to win !
Thou art blind to the insidious power of formulated
sin :
For as when in some hidden hollow of the mine
a vapour stays,
To strike terror by its ghost-like murmur after
many days :
So can sin, by this or that diversion for awhile
kept under,

Uplift its cruel sword again and cleave the very
soul asunder.
Tis as if the boaconstrictor should relax his dire
embrace,
For an antepast of false hope in his helpless
victim's face.
There is that can charm the serpent, and his deadly
folds shall be
Weak as are the trustful twinings of the arms of
infancy.
But thou yet must learn a lesson deeper, if not
bitterer, far,
Of how vain without thy Maker all thy best
endeavours are.

In thy desultory wanderings thou hast come to
mighty Rome,
Once the Old World's stately palace, now its
grand memorial tomb.
By an interest unflagging day by day thy feet are
led
To the ruined homes and hauntings of the great
historic dead.
Thou art standing in the Forum, and the stones
beneath thy feet

Are of those that Horace trod on near the
 cloistered Vestals' seat,

When the opportune subpœna gave the courtly
 poet rest

From the intolerable babbling of his pertinacious
 pest.

From the lower excavations now thou wendest to
 the hill

Where the lives of trembling courtiers hung upon
 a tyrant's will,

And thy keen imagination revels in its strength
 among

Those crumbling walls which still ring back the
 echoes of satiric song :

Here, Rome's lords, in due obedience to the
 imperial behest,

Sat in grave deliberation how the turbot should
 be dressed ;

There, still shines the tessellated pavement of
 the banquet-room

Where, in purple-cushioned ease reclining,
 favoured guests had come ;

And the eyes of Cæsar gloated when he saw the
 monstrous fish

All but overlap the spreading margin of the
 Samian dish.

But ere half thine explorations are completed thou
dost feel

The shadow of a weary languor o'er thy sated
spirit steal.

But change of scene can still stave off that creep-
ing horror's deadly hold,

Like fresh fuel on the fire that keeps the tiger
from the fold.

So from land to land thou rovest like the legen-
dary Jew,

After dead enjoyment ever seeking something
strange and new.

Thus, not finding what thou lackest in fresh
places, thou art come

Again to wander mid the stately ruins of imperial
Rome.

And thou triest to be happy: but in vain: for joy
is free

And forceless as the glinting light that dances on
the summer sea.

Now a sudden recollection moves thy fancy to
explore

The Tabularium's gloomy chambers; for when
thou wert there before

Thou wast near a hidden danger from an un-
fenced stair beneath;

And, stumbling at it in the darkness, thou
might'st well have met thy death.

Now upon the wall beside a little oil-lamp's
friendly glow

Breaks the thick gloom and warns the traveller
of the treacherous depth below.

"Ah, since then" thou thinkest "some one must
have death or damage found,"

While I, escaping such disaster, stand here once
more safe and sound.

Is it merely chance that brings me to this self-
same spot to-day ?

Rather, is it not a voice from God, inviting me
to pray ?

Surely His love was waiting till in union com-
plete

Conditions tending to my spirit's permanent
repose should meet."

And thou lookest up to heaven for remission of
thy sin,

And for grace to cleanse thine heart from every
stain that lurks within.

And a loving presence round thee seems to scatter
all thy fears,

Bringing back the careless calm and buoyant hope
of earlier years ;

And thou criest in a welcome sense of rest from
weary strife ;

“ Oh be this my joyful birthday to a new and
better life ! ”

And, as if in gratulation of thy soul's release,
there swells

Through the vault's imprisoned gloom a mingled
peal of sweet church bells.

For it is the Eve of Easter when Rome's streets
and lanes along

Sounds the silver-chiming prelude of her resurrec-
tion-song.

As when one who loves to wander where the
spring with lavish hand

Scattereth her boons of beauty o'er the winter-
wasted land,

Sees the young buds of the hawthorn, sweetest
flower of sweet Maytime,

Drooping 'neath the untimely rigour of the
blossom-blighting rime :

But the sun beats back the spoiler, and the flower
clothes the thorn,

To cheer the hearts of early workers at the open-
ing of the morn ;

And the breeze conveys its fragrant summons to
the wandering bee

To gather while the Maytime lasteth from those
blossoms plenteously :

Thus, while those sweet bells are ringing out their
holy Easter chime,

Thy sorrow-blighted zest of life awaketh to its
early prime.

So thy rovings thou renewest with a lightsome
heart again,

Deeming thyself free for ever from thy spirit's
heavy chain ;

And mid the whirl of busy cities, o'er the sweep
of dales and dells,

Soundeth still the soothing echo of those happy
Easter bells.

But how sweet soever earthly echoes sound in
marble domes,

At length through graduated waves of mellow
murmuring silence comes.

Thus what seemed a prayer-won boon thy sorrow-
wasted soul to bless,

Though thou strivest to retain it, echo-like grows
less and less ;

Till of all that golden sunlight every lingering
trace is gone,

And again thy world-worn heart is left to pine its
woe alone ;

And the dread recurring burden of thy weariness
and grief

Presses on thee all the heavier for that respite
bright and brief.

And while sorrow's bitter portion seems to quench
all happier choice,

A still more terrible temptation utters its seductive
voice :

"If there be a God who made thee, why when
thou hast fairly tried

To secure thy soul's contentment, with religion for
thy guide,

Should He mock a heart that trusts Him with a
vain and specious show

Of peace that bideth for a season but to aggravate
thy woe ?

Give the fruitless struggle over ! What more can
religion do ?

Wilt thou court its tantalizing visions all thy brief
life through ?

Fair and full has been the trial thou hast made of
the control

Of strict and self-restraining rules upon the im-
pulse of thy soul.

It has failed thee : bow thy neck to superstition's
yoke no more :

And thy grasp on life's enjoyments will be firmer
than before."

But there's a voice, if man will listen, which will
drown the Siren's breath
That, in dulcet measure flowing, lures him to the
shores of death ;
And that voice with power persuasive speaketh to
thine inner ear ;
And, still craving for relief, thou bowest down thy
soul to hear—

Mortal, when the voice of conscience called thee to
amend thy ways,
And to give to wisdom's guidance all the remnant
of thy days,
Far too shallow was thy turning : just a light con-
fession said,
A mere whitewash of repentance o'er thy black
transgression spread ;
Then in milder joy to seek a refuge from the sore
distress
Which justly upon hearts to sin enslaved is ever
wont to press,

Mingling with it such sufficient measure of religious
leaven

As should zest thine earthly portion with the
happy hope of heaven.

Did'st thou think by such a penance God's absolv-
ing grace to win ?

Was it ought but an addition to thine unrepented
sin ?

But that hour when from thy sadness thou did'st
gain a glad release,

And Mercy seemed to meet thy prayer with all
the fulness of its peace ;

And, iridescent with the light of heaven from
feeling's deepest wells,

The fountain of thy joy leaped up responsive to
those Easter bells :

Was it but a fond delusion ? was it but a devil's
lie ?

And if in truth it was from God, oh why did it so
quickly fly ?

Nay : for as the good God maketh suns to rise
and showers to fall,

Bringing harvest's genial blessings as a common
boon for all :

So, sounds that strike upon the ear and sights
that fill the wond'ring ken,
Can join in combination sweet to witch the willing
souls of men.

There's a touch of subtile power even in insensate
things,
Which to sorrow-burdened breasts a present con-
solation brings.

For, in weariness of life beneath some deep heart-
hidden woe,

One hath courted soothing slumber when the
summer sun is low.

Head upon his hand he sleepeth in oblivion of
his pain,

Living for a little moment in the happy past
again,

In some scene of life's brief morning all unstained
by sorrow's tears,

Looming in the shadowy dream-land through the
mists of bygone years.

And he wakes up from his slumber as the dying
daylight falls

In a shower of golden glory o'er the relics on the
walls ;

And the odours through the window streaming
from the garden's bloom

Blend mysteriously with those vision-shadows of
his childhood's home.

So by memory's magic music melancholy's ghost
is laid ;

As from Saul the evil spirit passed away when
David played.

But where was all the disenthralment of his harp's
melodious spell,

When the gloom of Endor's cavern bickered with
the fires of hell ?

But thou thinkest : " If the soothing charm I found
in beauty's quest,

Which, a sweet reaction bringing, gave my weary
spirit rest,

By the inevitable doom of all things earthly took
its flight,

Why should my religion cheat me like a vision of
the night ? "

Ah, but was it such religion as sustains the droop-
ing heart,

Not mid favoured spots of nature, not mid
miracles of art,

Not where an o'erflowing coffer drains the pam-
pered fancy dry,

Not where health embrowns the cheek and flashes
from the laughing eye ;
But where within the choking mine or mid
machinery's deafening play
A dull routine of weary toil employs the hands
from day to day ;
Or where some sudden crushing loss has bowed
the rich man's honoured head,
And straitened means can scarce supply the
humbler home with daily bread ;
Or where the sick man hopes no more his former
vigour to regain ;
For, drop by drop, his life is slowly ebbing out in
sleepless pain ?
Yes, there's the risk for those whose cup with
earthly good is brimming over,
A snare which in our hours of joy is not so easy
to discover,
That self-indulgence unrestrained will grow at
length to such excess
As, with its fatal swamping might all heart-religion
to suppress.
E'en as the bird that soars and sings is made
dumb by the muttering thunder ;
Or as a death-grip from below can drag the
strongest swimmer under.

And such a feeble thing as that avails thee
nothing in the hour
When hell, back-beaten for a time, renews the
assault with deadlier power.
For they alone can know, who feel the writhings
of the worm within,
How strong and clinging is the grasp upon the
heart of cherished sin.
The band which fluttered loose at first, so slight
and silky-soft, at length,
Almost before we're well aware, has bound us
with a cable's strength.
Ah, of the words of weary woe which from sin-
burdened hearts arise,
As if in a despairing wail, up to the pure and
pitying skies,
Oh none are sadder sure than that which cryeth :
" Oh I would be good,
I would be wise, I would be true, I would be
holy, if I could !"
When all the healthy joys and cares of life
sufficing man before,
Blighted and withered by his sin, can feed his
pining soul no more ;
And, powerless as a little child within a giant's
sinewy arm,

All the whole soul is drawn within the focus of
some damning charm.

Alas, poor soul ! no woe of earth can be compared
with woe like this :

Its gloom is pointed with a flame that cometh
from the black abyss.

So was it when, in dalliance fond with tempting
words, Eve's eye was made

To fix its glance upon the fair and fatal fruit
which God forbade.

The beauty and the bloom were gone from all
that charmed her wiser hours :

There was no splendour in the sky, no music in
the leafy bowers ;

And all the fruits so fair and good which God had
given so full and free,

Were soured and blackened by the blight which
breathed from that forbidden tree.

But there's that which, apprehended rightly, can
in truth supply

With heaven's own food the pining famine of thy
weary misery.

For God the Eternal Son, who dwelleth in the
high and holy place,

Took into Himself a mortal nature to redeem
our race.

Mystery of love stupendous, deeper far than
thought can gauge !

Learn its sorrow-soothing lesson ! Read it in the
sacred page !

Not in the imperfect version some with good
intent have given,

Narrowing in their earthly blindness that which
came complete from heaven,

Enforcing duly the Atonement for our sins by
Jesus made ;

But leaving all the rest of Incarnation's doctrine
in the shade.

For, to gain the strength and comfort that great
doctrine can supply,

We must see it in the light of its divine
philosophy.

Divine : for it pervades the truth that was to
holy seers revealed,

And stands for ever in the scroll by God's own
Spirit signed and sealed.

And all the teachers of the word who in their
prudent steps have trod,

Have used it as a mighty means to win the souls
of men to God.

Do we hold that evolution is the great creative
law ?

Then, in reverent contemplation, we may this
conclusion draw :

Step by step from form minutest a life-giving
power expands

'Till man, the flower of the creation, in his Maker's
image stands.

But, God's holy law transgressing, he hath fallen
from his height,

In his body soul and spirit smitten with a
deadly blight ;

And the whole creation groaneth, waiting for a
glad new birth

From the clinging curse transmitted by the fallen
lord of earth.

Thus there needed a remaking : so shall the
corroded chain

Link by link in pristine beauty glad the eyes of
God again ;

And the sin-defaced creation be in light and love
restored

By the renovating virtue flowing from the Incar-
nate Lord.

Thus that wondrous Incarnation crowneth
evolution's plan ;

And in Jesus Son of Mary we behold the perfect
Man.

And we see a law of contact in the realm of heart
and mind,

By which the feeble can grow strong, the foolish
wise, the coarse refined.

So has one of nature's princes in the olden times
gone by,

Dowered with an angel's heart and dowered with
a prophet's eye,

Sought and found prevailing power to uplift a
prostrate race ;

And he comes down from the mountain with God's
light upon his face ;

And in prudent legislation gives them rules they
can obey ;

And by words of suasive wisdom wakes the
soul within the clay.

And in every age are prophets faithful to their
holy trust,

Whose burning words have power to raise our
grovelling spirits from the dust.

Thus in wondrous condescension taking human
flesh and soul,

God the Son, the Pure and Holy, came in
contact with the foul :

That man the child of sin and sorrow, maimed in
heart and maimed in limb,
Might be raised and cleansed and healed in mystic
union with Him.
He can free thee from the bitter anguish of thine
evil hour,
And lift a holy hand to touch thy leprous soul
with healing power.
Tempted : He can succour those whose souls are
by temptation torn ;
Once Himself a child of sorrow, He can feel for
those who mourn.

As a member of the Body of the God-Man, claim
thy place
In the glad regeneration of the covenant of
grace.
This hath been the double burden weighing on
thy soul within,
A sickening sense of ill-desert, the power of thy
besetting sin.
But the perfect absolution that doth from His
passion flow
Can purge thee from thy guilt and make thee
whiter than the driven snow ;

And the miserable thralldom that hath held thine
heart so long
Can in Him be crushed and broken, who is
stronger than the strong.

And though temptation, still recurring, should thy
feeble heart assail,
Cling to Him in firm persistence ; and in Him thou
shalt prevail.

Dreary still may be the valley where thy fainting
footsteps tread ;
And the burning blast of noon may beat upon
thine aching head ;
And, from out the straight path lying, shady
groves may woo thee still
Of their God-forbidden solace to enjoy thy
wonted fill.

Stay not ! Turn not ! Look not ! Think not !
firmly fix thy faltering eye
Where, like clouds, in the dim distance yonder
spreading uplands lie !
Bravely bear thy spirit's anguish, treading o'er
that treacherous ground ;
Like the savage who has pierced his quivering
flesh with ghastly wound,

And hangs in torturing impalement till his
 straining fibres part,
Drinking fortitude's stern lesson into his
 barbarian heart—

Thou hast gained the height at last where all
 God's faithful ones have stood ;
And the bracing breeze of heaven is pouring
 health into thy blood ;
And farther onward, through the mists that for
 awhile must round it cling,
Thine eye can catch a distant glimmer of the city
 of the King.

THEN AND NOW.

One summer's morn—'twas in my boyhood's
prime—

I lay reclined within a woodland dell,
Listening in spirit to the silent chime
That Zephyr ringeth on the heather-bell.
Within me, like a deep sea's rippling swell
Dyed in the cloudless heaven's empurpling
blue,
The wavelets of my young thoughts rose and
fell—

Thoughts that were then so beautiful and true—
Tinged by that Light from heaven which maketh
all things new.

And fifty changeful years have come and gone ;

And, mid the flowering heather once again,
I listen to the bell, with solemn tone
That tolls its measured knell from yonder fane,
Telling how youth's full-orb'd bliss must wane,
And all its splendour merge in formless gloom,
Melting in tears like frostwork from the pane,
Until there seems 'neath fate's remorseless doom

No balm save kindly death, no refuge but the tomb.

In winter's frost we pine for flowery spring :

It comes, but bringeth not the wished-for joy ;
And time o'er every hard-won gain doth fling

The brooding shadow of some heart's annoy ;
The bright hopes cheat the man, which cheered
the boy ;

And the heart droops neath sin's sirocco blast ;
The fine gold changeth into base alloy ;

And dead eyes with heart-crushing kindness cast
A sad, reproachful gaze out of the tideless past.

But hark, a still voice speaks : " O grovelling soul,
Stint not thy view to time's o'ershadowing
night !

Through yon blue depths where myriad systems
roll

If thou could'st speed thee with an arrow's flight
The infinite would mock thy feeble might.

Thy life is there, thy home, thy native clime ;
Thought cannot gauge the rapture of the sight."

I listened—and the darkness changed to light ;
And the heath-bell once more rang out its matin
chime.

A VANISHED FACE.

In the aurora of our life's brief morn,
Ere labour's stern exactions claim our hands,
When the young heart by care is all unworn,
Blessing and blessed some gentle woman
stands,

In human form acting an angel's part,
Mingling her soul in childhood's smiles and
tears,
The magic of whose manner wins the heart,
And keeps her memory green through all the
years.

Whether she's dead or only old and gray
We know not : for we see her now no more ;
And yet on us her sweet face shines alway
In all the freshness of the days of yore.

Such things pass from us : the relentless law
Which severs hearts its course unswerving
runs :
We see not now the sights which once we saw ;
And we change ever with the changing suns.

We miss the fulness of the love which blessed
Our earlier years ; and we are fondly fain
To find where it abides : it mocks our quest ;
And the search ends in disappointment's pain.

Whether it be on land or over seas
The seeking and acquist are far asunder ;
As echo only answered Hercules
When pearl-wreathed arms drew shrinking
Hylas under.

THE VOICE OF THE CREATION.

I groan in travail-throes of complex pain
 From Heaven to Earth, from Earth to Sheol
 below
 'Till one strong word shall break obstruction's
 chain
 And ease my pangs and let the burden go.

Wherever man acts his allotted part
 Evil with good and foul with fair is crossed ;
 And in the secret shrine of every heart
 Lingers a saddening sense of something lost.

Earth's homes are full of weary souls that pine :
 Sweet hopes have fled and left them all forlorn :
 Hopes bright and brief as when the orient brine
 Laughs back the golden kisses of the morn.

Look where through mad ambition's selfish quest
 Man meets his brother man in deadly strife !
 Look where drought closes the Great Mother's
 breast,
 And plague and murrain blast the breath of
 life !

Nor is the burden only borne below :

It stirs heaven's bliss with rippings vague and
dim :

A shadow falleth on the golden glow,

A sadness on the songs of Seraphim.

As the blood curdles with a sudden chill

Caught from some troubled spirit wandering by,
In some gay group when pipe and tabor thrill
Their souls with music's winsome witchery;

Or as a child amid her birthday glee

Feels her young heart with heaviness oppress'd
To find the little birds she comes to see
Gasping and dying in their frozen nest:

So those good spirits sigh in pity wide

As they look downward from their home above:
E'en as when He looked up to heaven and
sighed,

The Great God-Man amid His works of love.

But as when life stirring the void beneath

In dædal beauty from night's troubled womb,
Burst into form beneath the Quickenin' Breath :
So will it be when my birth-hour is come.

Then when the awful recreative nod
Shaketh time's chaos through its depth and
height
The joy song of the morning-stars of God
Shall thunder through the corridors of light.

THE VOICE OF THE ANGEL.

As one who, standing on a grassy mound,
Drinks in the woodland melodies of morn :
So stand I on this whirling globe of earth,
And listen, as the myriad-circling spheres
Roll their sweet thunder through the fields of
space.

Yet, in a power by God to us transferred,
We can conform to human thoughts and acts.
As once with Abraham talked the Mystic Three,
And rested on their way, and ate man's food.
And now I go to one whose wavering youth
Hath yielded to temptation, and the snake
Hath wound his first coil round his willing heart.
His body sleeps ; but he himself can hear :
And I will speak to him in measured rhyme ;
For that suits well the dreaming ear of sleep.
True it will fly when waking life succeeds,
As the stars fly when night gives place to day.
But yet some good impression may remain
To woo his erring spirit back to God.

Go thou in memory's deathless power back to thy
childhood's time

When the soul feels but cannot know the mystery
 of its prime ;
When to the young unfolding sense the meanest
 object brings
A joy unfound in gems of price on diadems of
 kings.
Then 'twas an ever-new delight to wander and
 explore
The wild flowers in the summer woods, the shells
 upon the shore ;
And all fair things that earth could show wore to
 thy wondering eye
The morning glow that never fades from sweet
 eternity.
I see thee in thy father's fields : the sun is on his
 way,
And thou art tumbling with thy mates among the
 new-mown hay ;
And He the Great I Am who sees all things in
 heaven and earth
Looks with an eye of tender love upon thy guile-
 less mirth ;
And 'neath His Spirit's voiceless rule thy being's
 pulses move,
As ocean tides beneath the sway of the gentle
 moon above.

Oh, if all precious things were thine which glad
the eyes of men,

Would'st thou not gladly give them all to be as
thou wert then ?

But call upon thy God with tears and break the
evil spell

That chokes the fountain of thy prayers : and all
shall yet be well.

And as the suppliant bent to Christ under his
legal ban,

And rose from leprous misery a healed and happy
man :

So shalt thou 'scape the deadly doom of sin's
slow-wasting blight,

And stand thine own true self once more among
the sons of light.

Yet sigh not for the bliss which passed with
childhood's years away :

The dew of morning falls but once through the
long summer day.

But thou in victory over sin shalt taste a joy
sublime

That fades not under gathering years as fade the
joys of time :

A joy he cannot hope to know who wastes his
manhood's power,

Heedless of aught beyond the poor excitement of
the hour.

Thine be the nobler life of one who, strong in
heart and limb,

Can endure hardness for the Lord who bore the
cross for him ;

Who, when he's called upon to tread where
martyred saints have trod,

Up the steep hill of willing pain to work some
work for God

In surly winter's beating storm or summer's faint-
ing heat,

Will still press on although the flint blush neath
his straining feet.

And as the wandering bird that seeks to gain her
distant nest

When the fell spirits of the storm howl in their
wild unrest,

Over the ocean's pathless wastes plyeth her
weary wing,

Crush thou sloth's puling sickness by labour's
healthy swing !

Thus thou, from sin's enslaving wiles enfranchised
and remanned,

Shalt know the sweetness of God's love, the
strength of His right hand.

In times of danger and of dread, as well as when
thy way
Leads through the sheltered vales of peace His
arm shall be thy stay.
When Nature sleeps in silvery sheen of moonlight
calm, and when
Leaps the blue levin from the cloud to blast the
lives of men,
The infant rests in fearless trust upon the
mother's breast :
So thou on His unchanging love in weal or woe
shalt rest,
And so from stage to stage of life thine even
course shalt run,
To God, thy neighbour, and thyself, thy duty
bravely done :
'Till lapse of years shall bring the time when
thou shalt soar away
Up to the peaceful vestibule of heaven's eternal day.
For not as the woe-wasted man, when sleep had
dried his tears,
Wakes back to cold reality from dreams of
happier years,
Thou from the troublous dream of life, with
rapture-beaming eye,
Shalt wake to the unfading bliss of great eternity.

JUDITH.

Jael, thy left hand was firm, and heavy the
hammer fell
That sped our proud foe at the heels of his host
to the mirk of the nethermost hell.
When Deborah had gone with the warriors of
God, and the might of her burning
words
Was as wine to the hearts of dispirited men, and
a whetstone to their swords.
Twin stars ye stand in our history's sky in
quenchless light to show
What work for the Lord in troublous times a
woman's weak arm can do.
And last night in a dream methought I was one
of the sons of God who made
Yon cloud-courts ring when His mighty hand the
earth's foundations laid.
I stood on this sea-girt world of ours, and lifted
my wondering eye,
As night's glittering lamps on creation's fourth
day flashed out from the shadowy sky :
Not all at once in a speck of time ; but as through
the sweet summer hours

Star after star on some emerald mead come out
bright constellations of flowers.

And as on two stars standing lengthways I gazed
—'twas just ere the vision took flight—

A third star was added, and made with the twain
a glorious trigon of light.

And I woke as the watch-crowing cock sang the
dawn that gleamed in the dim eastern
sky ;

And I knew that the third of those dream-sighted
stars had read me my destiny.

Great God of my fathers, ensinew my arm for the
deed

That shall lift up the heads of Thy sons in this
hour of their need.

The heathen oppressor is waiting to ravin and slay,
As the eagle that poises his wings ere he swoop
on his prey.

Thou hast dowered Thine handmaid with beauty :
infuse it with serpentine wile

That shall kill with the honey-sweet charm of a
treacherous smile.

The hand of a woman shall shatter the horn of
his trust ;

And the sword of his slayings shall spill his red
life in the dust.

But to Thee, Lord of hosts, all the honour and
glory be given

From Thy kingdom on earth to Thy throne in
the heavens' high heaven!

Upheld by Thine arm, I go forth : by Thy grace
I aspire

To shine in our history's sky the third in that
triplet of fire.

LAUGHTER.

Amid sin's harsh discordancies sweet boons of
 sound are given,
Which show that this woe-weary world still links
 itself with heaven.
And such is childhood's ringing laugh, joyous and
 dewy-sweet
As songs of birds at that still hour "when night
 and morning meet."
'Tis the music of the young heart's chords tuned
 by the quick hand of glee,
Without one jarring note to mar its perfect
 harmony.

It falls upon the tired ear as if a seraph-song
Warbled in soothing interlude mid words of
 cruel wrong.
And as the traveller, parched and faint 'neath
 summer's burning ray,
Turns to the cool refreshing spring that gushes
 by the way,
The heart that's weary of the world, by hollow
 forms beguiled,
Drinks in a sweet refreshment from the laughter
 of a child.

But ah, the wingèd joys of youth, how soon they
fly away,
Like the fair fragile flowers of spring that bloom
but for a day!
How many a life so blithesome once is as a
shattered lute
With all its sweet chords rent in twain and all its
music mute ;
And, 'neath the weary bitterness of sorrow's heavy
chain,
The stricken heart may sadly smile, but never
laugh again.

And yet the heart, though sorrow-charred, that
has learned its God to know,
Shall phoenix-like uplift itself from the ashes of
its woe,
Where all the hell-born brood of sin and death
shall only be
The echoes of a troubled dream that hath fled
the memory :
When pain and care and all sad things shall far
away be hurled,
And great eternity shall solve the riddle of the
world.

WEARINESS.

Let me sleep, let me sleep!

My merry mates are gone ;
Dark shadows o'er the meadows creep,
And I am all alone :

Let me sleep !

Let me sleep, let me sleep !

The wished-for height is won ;
But oh, the hill-side was so steep
Under the burning sun :

Let me sleep !

Let me sleep, let me sleep !

I cannot stem the flood ;
My weary heart can only weep
Its woe in tears of blood :

Let me sleep !

Let me sleep, let me sleep,

Where spring's sweet daisies grow
Over the slumber still and deep
Of those who lie below !

Let me sleep !

FROM BIRTH TO LIFE.

Outbreathed from depths of boundless power
Which angels long to scan,
With flesh and blood's death-destined dower
Comes forth the soul of man.
It seems to seek its home afar
As through its body's eye
It looks up at the little star
That twinkles in the sky.

With careless step forth fares the boy
When morn peeps o'er the hill,
And all things bring their draught of joy
His spirit's cup to fill.
And bright hopes stir within his breast
Of other things in store
That shall be open to his quest
When boyhood's days are o'er.

But man a farther stage must reach
Of hard laborious days
From where pale genius utters speech
That sets the world agaze

To where beneath the stress of noon
The rustic sons of toil
Win from the earth her autumn boon
Of corn and wine and oil.

The old man's head is bent with years ;
Slow comes his panting breath ;
With faint and faltering steps he nears
The stony gate of death.
And enters he the grave's cold night,
Worn with his journey's length ;
But from the crag a youthful sprite
Upsprings in deathless strength.*

THE END.

* The last of the four stanzas of this poem was suggested by William Blake's well-known illustration, "Death's Door."



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